

Doctor's Bag



by Robert Sorrenti, MD
Chief Medical Officer

WHAT TO DO IF YOU GET AN EYE INFECTION

The best way to decrease the risk of eye infection is to use your contact lenses as recommended. However, due to the inherent nature of contacts, wearers have a higher risk of infection than non-wearers.

If your eyes are bloodshot or irritated, follow these guidelines:

- Immediately remove the contact lens from your affected eye.
- If the problem is general with mild discomfort, seek advice from your eye care professional. Some brands of contacts are more comfortable than others; it may simply be a matter of changing brands.
- If you experience mild irritation and the eye doesn't get better within 1-2 hours after removing the lens, make an appointment for an eye examination.
- If the problem includes blurred vision, serious pain and/or redness and the eye doesn't improve immediately after removal of the lens, call your eye care professional without delay. These may be signs of a serious infection.
- Take your contact lenses, lens case and contact solutions with you when you receive treatment for an eye infection.

Always consult your eye care practitioner if you have any concerns about wearing contact lenses or eyeglasses.

HLInfo YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO HEALTH CARE AWARENESS

Contact Lens Safety Tips

Contact lenses are medical devices regulated by the Food & Drug Administration (FDA). The only safe contacts are those available by prescription from an authorized vendor.



The following are contact lens safety tips from the FDA:

- Always have a back-up pair of glasses with a current prescription.
- Check with your eye care professional before using medicines that could affect your vision or irritate your eyes.
- Ask your eye professional about eyeglass and contact lens safety during sports activities.
- Always wash your hands before handling contact lenses.
- Do not expose your contact lenses to any water: tap, bottled, distilled, lake or ocean water. (Do not put your lenses in your mouth to wet them. Saliva is not a sterile solution.)
- Do not substitute sterile saline solutions for multi-purpose solutions.
- Apply cosmetics after inserting lenses and remove lenses before removing makeup.
- Do not "top off" the solutions in your contact lens case. Always discard all of the leftover contact lens solution after each use.
- Replace your contact lens storage case every 3-6 months.
- Apply aerosol products (hairspray, cologne, deodorant, etc.) before inserting lenses.
- Inform your employer if you wear contacts. Some jobs may require the use of eye protection equipment or may require that you not wear contact lenses.
- Save the directions that came with your lenses. If you didn't get a patient information booklet, request one from your eye care professional or access through the manufacturer's website.
- Replace contacts as recommended. Throw away disposable lenses after recommended wearing period.
- Do not sleep in daily wear lenses.

HealthLink members may be eligible for discounts on vision care products and services through the *SpecialOffers* online discount program and/or Crown Vision Center's discount card program. Consult your benefit administrator or visit www.healthlink.com for more information.

HealthLink®, Inc., is an Illinois corporation. HealthLink, Inc. is an organizer of independently contracted provider networks, which it makes available by contract to a variety of payors of health benefits, including insurers, third party administrators or employers. HealthLink has no control or right of control over the professional, medical judgment of contracted providers, and is not liable for any acts or failures to act, by contracted providers. HealthLink, Inc. is not an insurance company and has no liability for benefits under benefit plans offered or administered by payors. HealthLink is a registered trademark of HealthLink, Inc. and a separately incorporated and capitalized subsidiary of WellPoint, Inc. The information provided herein is educational only, and is not intended to provide medical care or medical advice, which only your doctor can provide.

DidUKnow?

As reported by WebMD, a February 2009 CIBA Vision lens company survey of 1,654 U.S. contact lens users concludes:

- 40% of contact lens wearers don't replace their lenses in keeping with lens makers' guidelines.
- The top reason for misusing two-week or one-month replaceable contact lenses is "forgetfulness."
- The top reason for misusing daily disposable lenses is "saving money."
- Younger patients are more likely to keep their contact lenses beyond the manufacturer's date.

In addition, About.com Health reports:

- The single, largest risk factor for permanent vision loss is wearing lenses overnight. The risk for developing infection is five times higher if a person sleeps while wearing contact lenses.
- Other risk factors for developing serious eye infections while wearing contacts include smoking, purchasing lenses over the Internet, improper cleaning and extended wearing times.

Newsletter Information Sources

Food & Drug Administration (FDA) "Medical Devices: Contact Lenses Everyday Eye Care," "Contact Lens Solutions and Products," www.fda.gov/MedicalDevices; WebMD, "Wearing Contacts Past Their Prime," by Mirandi Hitti, June 4, 2009, www.webmd.com/eye-health/news/20090604/wearing-contact-lenses-past-their-prime; "Silicone Hydrogel Contact Lenses: Safer Than Regular Soft Contacts?" By Troy Bedinghaus, O.D., About.com Updated: January 15, 2009 http://vision.about.com/od/contactlenses/a/Silicone_Hydrog.htm

